

Masthead Logo

**The Iowa Review**

Volume 19  
Issue 3 *Fall*

Article 10

1989

# Using Some Words That Showed up Recently: Homage to Stravinsky; To Be Placed in a Clay Bowl in Managua

Marvin Bell

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ir.uiowa.edu/iowareview>

Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Bell, Marvin. "Using Some Words That Showed up Recently: Homage to Stravinsky; To Be Placed in a Clay Bowl in Managua." *The Iowa Review* 19.3 (1989): 24-26. Web.  
Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.3787>

This Contents is brought to you for free and open access by Iowa Research Online. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Iowa Review by an authorized administrator of Iowa Research Online. For more information, please contact [lib-ir@uiowa.edu](mailto:lib-ir@uiowa.edu).

## USING SOME WORDS THAT SHOWED UP RECENTLY

### 1. Homage to Stravinsky

Stravinsky charges into the crowd, cape flying,  
stepping on the black notes only. In dark shoes  
he has come to see the corpse of modern music.  
All the usual scales are shot. The sandy look is gone  
from the bowls of his cheeks—that so gave them  
their resonance, and his lips are as cracked as  
a drumhead in the rear of the band closet.  
If the crow's-feet of his smile still lead us into  
a vision, they are now the claws of an old order.  
Revolution must follow revolution. In the bowl  
of the mouthpiece of a trumpet, a cracked lip  
claws the high registers, until black notes drop  
like clothespins from a straight shot of old line.

### 2. To Be Placed in a Clay Bowl in Managua

Under low clouds, an eagle's fists  
free the branch beneath, open claws  
for the usual. It's time for all small things to  
pray—with cracked lips, and the forest, oh,  
on both sides. The eagle—oh, coolly!—charts a  
flight from empty to full. It stretches a shadow  
that brings night into the open. It wraps  
its dinner in its flag. It sees the camouflaged  
when it moves, and then *it* moves. The eagle was  
a cold weather hunter, but there are unexplained  
spottings: bones, martyrs—that sort of thing.  
And one was shot from the sky, one day when  
the background was right for seeing what it was.

### 3. Our Clawfooted Bathtub

Over the lip went Archimedes, displacing  
all the water he was not. His “Eureka!”  
echoes in history, restating  
dry volumes, from Athens to Topeka.

Some days, you feel a part of something  
so wholly, all else is a tiny crack  
in a porcelain bowl. Then, just by bathing,  
you shape a law, so Greek it’s a fact.

### 4. Homage to Edward Weston

His heart shot through by the sun, underneath  
the black bowl of his photographer’s  
hood, he would purse and unpurse  
the lips of a shutter. He lived in a closet,  
where he sealed the cracks around the door  
and measured time by light  
and now by before.

His nudes that could be fruit,  
the torsos, arches, posters, the bidet!  
“How young I was,” he said. “That  
covers everything.” Later, he knew that  
photography had been young too.  
His earliest picture was of snow. Said Master  
Stieglitz, “You feel . . . , you have the beginning.

Will you go on? —I do not know.”

## 5. The Steinheim: Students Saying Goodnight

A castle that wasn't a castle but looked like it  
had those towers that heavy stone shot toward  
the sky, and some churchly pope's-hat windows  
(some cracked by happy rocks) and forward-  
looking battlements, but its army was outside  
in the collegiate cold, cracking wise and clawing  
the late night for last words and friendly mouths.  
The world for them was a bowl of good luck.

Then the war, the war that didn't look like it  
but had the shots, the cracked maps, the bowls  
of warm rice where the enemy dematerialized.  
And few could tell a claw from an open hand  
in the streets of Saigon, where business curved,  
with friendly lips cracking wise, in and around  
the trouble. After, our castles lay in ruins,  
the castles that had been castles but didn't look it.